



# Calvary MESSENGER

“ . . . God forbid that I should glory, save in  
the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ . . . ”

Galatians 6:14

## JANUARY 2024

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Calvary Messenger

January 2024

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**Editor:** Aaron D. Yoder  
 5188 W. 825 N., Leesburg, IN 46538  
 Ph: 574-646-2123; Fax: 800-956-7850  
[calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com](mailto:calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com)

**Contributing Editors:**  
 Simon Schrock, Enos D. Stutzman,  
 Aaron Lapp, Ronald J. Miller

**Missions Editor:** Floyd Stoltzfus  
 3750 E. Newport Rd.  
 Gordonville, PA 17529

**Youth Messages Editor:** Josh Kooistra  
 2445 Rough & Ready Rd.  
 New Concord, OH 43762  
[cm youtheditor@gmail.com](mailto:cm youtheditor@gmail.com)

**Junior Messages Editor:**  
 Mrs. Mary Ellen Beachy  
 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd.  
 Dundee, OH 44624  
[maryellenbeachy@icloud.com](mailto:maryellenbeachy@icloud.com)

**Women's Editor:**  
 Mrs. Susan Schlabach  
 7184 W. Henry Rd., Ripley, OH 45167  
[skschlabach@gmail.com](mailto:skschlabach@gmail.com)

**Circulation Manager/Treasurer:**  
 Barry Hochstetler  
 6681 Lake Rd.,  
 Hicksville, OH 43526  
 Ph: 419-487-0887  
[hochdrywall@gmail.com](mailto:hochdrywall@gmail.com)

## Our Father Knows

I do not know, I cannot see,  
What God's kind hand prepares for me.  
Nor can my glance pierce through the haze  
Which covers all my future ways.


And yet I know that o'er it all  
Rules He Who notes each sparrow's fall.  
I know the hand that hath me fed,  
And through the year my feet hath led.

I know the everlasting arm  
That hath upheld and kept from harm.  
I trust Him as my God and Guide  
And know that He will still provide.

I know not where His hand shall lead—  
Through desert wastes, o'er flowery mead.  
Mid tangled thicket set with thorn,  
Mid gloom of night or glow of morn.

But I still know my Father's hand  
Will bring me to His goodly land.  
Farewell, Old Year, with goodness crowned;  
A Hand Divine hath set thy bound.

Welcome the New Year, which shall bring  
Fresh blessings from my God and King.  
The Old we leave without a tear;  
The New we hail without a fear.

*Author unknown* 

## When Bearings Fail

On a recent morning on my way to work I stopped at a railroad crossing to allow a train to pass by. During the passing of the train there was one significant noisy train car axle. This reminded me of the fiery train derailment that occurred on February 3 of last year in East Palestine, Ohio. “The train was on its way from Madison, IL, to Conway, PA, when, around 9 p.m., 38 of its 150 cars derailed in East Palestine, a village of 4,700 residents about 50 miles northwest of Pittsburgh. A fire ensued, damaging an additional 12 cars. Shortly after the derailment, 1,500 to 2,000 residents were told to evacuate.”<sup>1</sup>

Several weeks later the National Transportation Safety Board (N.T.S.B) made the following statement. “In its first report on the accident, the N.T.S.B. said that the train’s crew had received an alert about an overheated wheel bearing only shortly before the derailment. The agency found that while the wheel bearing was heating up, an alarm did not sound to alert the crew to check a hot axle until

the train had passed a sensor not far from where it ultimately derailed. ‘This was 100 percent preventable,’ Jennifer L. Homendy, the N.T.S.B. chair, said at a news conference in Washington.”<sup>2</sup> The temperature of the bearing increased as the train passed two wayside defect detectors, but it wasn’t high enough to trigger an audible alarm message until it passed a third detector, Homendy said.<sup>3</sup> Surveillance video in one of the towns around 30 miles from where the accident occurred showed sparks and bright lights coming from beneath one of the cars at about the halfway point of the train.<sup>4</sup> While no lives were lost in the accident, the community has been suffering in many ways because of the chemical contamination of air, water, and ground and the likely loss of property value after the accident.

### So, what is the function of wheel

2. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/ohio-train-derailment-timeline.html>

3. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/23/us/ohio-train-derailment-east-palestine-thursday/index.html>

4. <https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/23/us/ohio-train-derailment-east-palestine-thursday/index.html>

1. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/ohio-train-derailment-timeline.html>

bearings and why do they fail? Wheel bearings typically allow axles and wheels to carry heavy loads with a very low amount of friction. One of the main ways that the friction is reduced is with a lubricant or grease between the moving surfaces of metal in the wheel. Let's look at "wheel bearings" that have the capability to fail in our everyday lives.

There are many kinds of "loads" that we carry in life. As adults, we carry loads of responsibility in our vocations, families, churches, and schools. In each of these areas, we face varying load weights depending on our level of responsibility and involvement. These "normal" loads are often overloaded with sicknesses and deaths, relational difficulties, and a combination of some or all of these at the same time. How do we know when we are overloaded and whether our "bearings" are starting to fail?

Train tracks have **wayside defect detectors** built into the tracks that send warning signals to railway stations or offices. These detectors are capable of reporting which axle in the train has a defect or problem. In some highly populated areas, these detectors are located every 14.9 miles.

Since humans have a varying range of ability to handle responsibilities and stress, having a roadside "hot box" to read the temperature of

our "bearings" isn't possible. Often our loads come and go, giving us a chance to cool down and find new strength to handle the load. And since we often do not admit to being overloaded, I believe God has given us our own "wayside defect detectors" in our spouses, fellow workers, and fellow church members. Many times the heavy loads and stresses in our lives are not necessarily spiritual, but they become tests of our faith as Job encountered. Indeed, his trials caused a derailment in his family, business, and social life. By the grace of God and Job's faith, he was able to maintain and deepen his faith and trust in God.

How can we keep our bearings cool and running smoothly? Having a good relationship with God is a given. Then there are several other things that will keep us on the tracks of life.

### **Love**

The best preventative maintenance we can perform on our "bearings" is to keep them well lubricated. A common known lubrication for everyday life is love. Having loving and caring relationships carries us through many heavy and overloaded times in our lives. While love is a good "grease" in our lives, I believe that two other lubricants may be more important.

## Grace

We often fail to recognize the grace of God that comes to us. It is hard to see much grace in Job's test. His wife recommended that he "*curse God and die.*" It is also hard to see that his three friends brought grace in his trials. But if we recall the conversation between God and Satan, I believe God extended grace in requiring Satan to spare Job's life. And while other times of grace in Job's trial are not evident, the Bible is full of promises of God's continual grace through the promise that He will never leave us, "*for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Hebrews 13:5b). Grace is a supernatural strength that surpasses all that we can ever do on our own.

## Faith

As with grace, faith in God provides a supernatural strength and power in life's greatest tests. As Job did not read the preface to his trials in Job 1:6-12, we often are focused on the physical and emotional loads at hand. We should understand that Satan, the enemy of our soul, uses any stress and overloads to not only derail our physical lives, but most importantly, our spiritual lives. He continues to fight against God and seeks to keep us from honoring God with our trust and faith and finally enjoying the incorruptible inheritance that is

*"reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through **faith** unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time"* (I Peter 1:4b-5). Peter continues with some powerful verses that give us an idea of the value of the stresses and overloads we carry at times. He puts it all in a spiritual perspective that challenges us to not give up in tough times, but realize that a faithful life brings much praise and honor to God, as did the life of Job.

In your next trial, when the "bearings" under your train car are screeching and smoking hot, ready to burst into flames and cause a catastrophic derailment that affects a whole community, first of all, know when to take a break. Listen to the "railroad defect detectors" in your life. Pump those bearings full of love. Recognize that God doesn't expect you to carry the load by yourself, but He is ever present with His grace, and His grace is a special high pressure and high temperature lubricant that works miracles in impossible situations. And keep on trusting Him! I can't say it better than Peter did in I Peter 1:7-9.

7 *"That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ:*

8 *Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory:*

9 *Receiving the end of your faith,*

*even the salvation of your souls.”*

In this new year, let's keep up the fight, and we'll see our Saviour and each other in heaven!

-AY 

## Announcement



### ***The 2024 Shepherds' Institute***



***Cornerstone Mennonite Church  
20000 County Road 655, Memphis, MO 63555***

**February 19-23, 2024**

*Equipping church leaders to be compassionate and wise in pastoral care, church administration, and biblical preaching.*

#### **Daytime classes for ordained and licensed ministers**

**8:45 . . . Devotions**

**9:00 Principles of Growth and Change (Pastoring) . . . Milo Zehr**

**10:45 Studying and Communicating Biblical Truth Effectively  
(Preaching) . . . Dave Yoder**

**12:15 Lunch**

**1:00 Introduction to World Views (Theology) . . . Chester Weaver**

**2:45 Round Table Discussion . . . Milo Zehr and Chester Weaver,  
moderators**

#### **Evening sessions (open to the public) – 7 p.m.**

**Core Mennonite Beliefs . . . Milo Zehr**

**Christian Liberty in the Context of Brotherhood . . . Dave Yoder**

For more information please contact: Chester Weaver (817) 648-1863  
504 N. King St., Itasca, TX 76055 / e-mail [chesterweaver@pcfnet.net](mailto:chesterweaver@pcfnet.net).

## *Announcement*

### ***Helping People in Need Seminar***

***January 16-18, 2024***

THE HEART MENDERS HANDBOOK: Methods

#### **Tuesday, January 16, 2024**

Objectives – Ben Waldner

Starting Well – David Martin

Having Good Meetings – Ben Waldner

Case Study, Part 1 – Tom Johnson

#### **Wednesday, January 17, 2024**

Asking Great Questions – David Martin

Interpreting Answers Accurately – Dave Snyder

Charting a Course – Bryan Fleagle

Finding Good Materials – Paul Garber

Case Study, Part 2 – Tom Johnson

#### **Thursday, January 18, 2024**

Productive Homework Basics – Bryan Fleagle

Making Homework Effective – Paul Garber

Heart Change – Dave Snyder

Finishing Well – Mason Gordon

Registration deadline: January 6, 2024

To register, or for more information regarding the seminar,  
please call 614-873-1199 or email [info@dmlmohio.org](mailto:info@dmlmohio.org)

The measure of a truly GREAT man  
is the courtesy with which he treats lesser men.



## The Glory of Light

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

**G**lory surrounds all of God's works. *"And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep."*

The first work of God was a work of glory. *"And God said, Let there be light, and there was light."* Luminous, translucent, splendid, incandescent, flamboyant, shimmering light! *"And God saw that the light was good"* (Genesis 1:2-4). Original, predicated, and jurisdictionally genuine light! Out of the eternal past, LIGHT!

Source – God

Coverage – entire earth

Contrast – opposite of darkness

Measurement – by the sun, moon, and stars

Effect – the regulation of time

Benefit – growth cycles

Duration – timeless

God gave light *"to divide the light from the darkness: and God saw that it was good,"* a goodness upon which no man could improve. LIGHT! A created non-substance, an invisible entity, a basic need for all created matter for which there is no possible substitute.

It was glorious, shedding abroad the means for the seeing of sight, its rays had the essence of might, the sun set in its place so that its shine is not too bright, and at the same time its beams for light are just right.

The Son of God is to the world what the sun is to the earth. The world of people is born in the darkness of sin, while the righteous have been born again into the light of life upon their personal choice for God's provision.

Light is pleasant. Sometimes we need to travel through the night; how good is the light in the morning of a new day. The faint indication of predawn light carries the prospect of dawn, the rising of the sun, and finally the full illumination of the whole earth in our hemisphere.

How good it is, even when it is only comprehended with our minds. But then when it is more fully perceived in our soul, even our spirit is touched by a measure of exuberance! Glory! A foretaste of heaven! *"And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever"*

(Revelation 22:5). As it became when the Lord God began the creation, He created light, even before the sun, moon, and stars. Even so it will be at the conclusion of time, when *“the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them”* (Revelation 20:11). Thereafter, the glory of God will be the light, as explained in the next paragraph.

The Apostle John was in the Spirit when Jesus revealed to him the holy city, new Jerusalem, *“descending out of heaven from God. Having the GLORY of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious, even a jasper stone, clear as crystal”* (Revelation 21:10, 11). From there the record follows to speak of a great wall, gates, angels, its 1500 cubed miles in measurement, and its 12 foundations. The walls were made of jasper, an opaque crystalline quartz, shimmering green. *“The city was pure gold, like unto clear glass,”* and the 12 foundations *“were garnished with all manner of precious stones”* with designated stones for each foundation. The colors of these stones were green, red, blue, yellow, brown, purple, and violet, with mixtures of red and white, all with varying hues of dark, medium, and light colors for contrasts, all radiant with glory from the light of God! The Bible says, *“And the city had no need*

*of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof.”*

And now a paragraph from my commentary on Revelation about this awesome glory. “Overhead could be the super renditions of light with color, as are the northern lights, and nature’s kaleidoscope display of our sunrises and sunsets on earth. Lights far overhead, like stars and planets and meteors, might be displayed in some fashion, even though there will be no night there. The word ‘garnished’ is a display word, not for the sake of vanity, but purely to showcase the glory of God.”

Garnish is not to embellish or exaggerate, but rather the inclusion of reality to highlight the very essence of beauty and magnificence inherent in its truest form. These statements in Revelation are not the sum total of heaven; chapters 21 and 22 are merely a glorious introduction of our eternal future in that magnificent place!

We are impressed more than ever by the specifics of light as a significant part in the inexpressible beauty of heaven. Two times the Bible says the glory of God did lighten the holy city in heaven (21:11, 23). We see no real need to differentiate between God Himself being the light, as the Bible states it, and that the glory of God is the light. Somehow, it is one

of the marvels of light created by God, Whose very glory issues forth as perceptible light, even though the light itself is unseen, even as God is invisible.

In Exodus 33, God was talking to Moses, as a man face to face. Moses requested to see God's glory. God said He will place Moses in a cleft of the rock, then hold His hand over the opening while His glory passes by, *"for there shall no man see me, and live."* Moses was permitted to *"see my back parts"* but not God's face. The glory of God took on various forms in the Old Testament, always in conjunction with His people, especially as light or fire.

John the Baptist was sent to bear witness of Jesus being the Light, that all men through Him might believe. *"That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world"* (John 1:9). Later, Jesus said, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12). In John 12:35, Jesus candidly teaches the people to walk in the light, and believe in the light, thus be children of light.

In the beginning of creation, God separated the light from the void, from that which was without form, from the darkness that *"was upon the face of the deep"* (Genesis 1:2).

The new heaven and new earth will replace the originally created earth which was spoiled by sin and even had on it the curse of judgment.

In the end of time and the world, Jesus said the unbelieving and unrighteous will be cast into outer darkness (Matthew 25:30). Jude also speaks of the final disposition of sinners, referring to them as *"wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever"* (Jude 13). The contrast at the final end is greater and much more consequential for the children of men than it was at the beginning. Light and darkness are eternally separated.

In what ways or means is this glory transferrable from God to us? Is it possible to partake of a portion of it in this life? Yes! The Bible says, *"But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass [mirror] the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory [from one degree of glory to another degree of glory], even as by the Spirit of the Lord"* (II Corinthians 3:18). Another powerful verse in the same context, boldly declares, *"For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness [at the creation], hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ"* (II Corinthians 4:6).

**The Bottom Line:** This is the

season of the year to allow our hearts to experience a renewing work of kindness toward all people, beginning in our homes, followed by an intentional mild-mannered spirit in our churches. Let this new year reflect in us the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, even as by the

Spirit of the Lord. *“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.”*

*“And blessed be his glorious name for ever: and let the whole earth be filled with his glory; Amen, and Amen”*  
(Psalm 72:19).



## Conservative, Liberal, or Spiritual

*Kelly Isaac*

**T**he Church of God is taking a closer look within, which is good. I believe Satan fears the strength and unity he sees in the Church. He knows that as we unitedly face the changing times, there will be power and direction. If he is to hinder the Church, he will first have to cause division among us. As he sees our concern, he knows he will not be able to do this on major issues but must rather try to cause division on minor issues, hoping to take away our vision, power, and unity. It is with this concern that this article is written.

Some years ago I read a newspaper editorial that has provided many thoughts in my mind. The writer was advocating political tolerance and was discussing the need for a balance of opposing opinions. He explained the way that different people think and why, especially focusing on the

good in each. I will share a few of his thoughts on being conservative and liberal, as I remember them. Then we want to compare this to spirituality.

**Conservative:** This word comes from the verb “conserve.” One who thinks in this way values very highly and wants to preserve the things that he has received and the values he has been taught. He would rather have a certain amount of restriction in his life than risk losing the things that he values. He tends to perceive those with liberal thinking as ones who will waste or destroy that which he treasures and—note this—hinder his goals. He will tend to follow tried and proven ways rather than to launch out into the unknown with no sure direction. He is rather afraid of making mistakes and values the security of following the direction of those who have gone before him. He could, if left to himself, become

demanding, harsh, and judgmental.

**Liberal:** This word comes from the word “liberty.” This is one who desires freedom to think and act as an individual; one who is generous and believes that all should have equal rights and freedom. He will have a strong distaste for any form of oppression and will work to eradicate it. He will perceive those who hold and try to maintain traditional values as—note again—a hindrance of the freedom that he prizes and wants to keep. He would rather launch out on an unknown way, seeking direction as he goes, than to risk being bound by unnecessary laws, even if it means he will make a few mistakes and will need to reverse at times. He will find security in freedom to live as he understands. He could easily become unconcerned, permissive, and somewhat resistant to authority.

As we look at the above ways of thinking, we can see each one definitely has very good points that are to be appreciated. There are also those points that could be a danger to a Christian. We can also see that many have a tendency to lean to one or the other. We can see that God’s plan was for the thinking of one to round out or complete that of the other. This is obvious to us as we look at our marriages and see how wives and husbands need one

another’s help to temper their ways. Differences in thinking are often compounded by culture, teaching, and environment.

In the political world and in the social realm, we often hear the thought presented that it takes a balance of opposing forces to bring peace and direction. This could very well be true in the worldly kingdom but let us be sure of one thing, the Church of God is not a political or social organization.

The Church must never find her peace or her direction by balancing the thinking of man. Our temperament is flesh and not spirit. According to the world, true Christians are all very conservative and rightfully so. We have a faith that must be preserved regardless of the cost, but if we use the extent of our differences from the world to establish our direction, we are using a very changeable standard and not the standard that was lifted up for us which is Jesus Christ (John 12:32). Spirituality is not the center between opinionated left or right thinking, neither is it merely obeying laws that have been established. Rather, it is a life of following the leading of the living Spirit of God within us, Who gives guidance according to each situation that we face.

If we look carefully at the two

ways lifted out at the beginning, we see immediately one thing that is not of God—opposition! Each one feels the other is a hindrance, or even somewhat of an enemy, of his goals and ideas. He feels that if he gives in, the other side may rule, and he will lose what *he* values. He will immediately relate best with those of his own thinking and, just as quickly, look to reveal the faults of those who differ with him. There is, at times, some yielding and compromise but no real giving up of one's opinion or submission to the other. To be a "liberal" or "conservative" means letting one of these characteristics dominate our lives. We give a certain allegiance to that way and to those who embrace it. We will feel that there is a fence between us and the other side and find a reluctance to cross it. We cannot be a "liberal" or "conservative" and be spiritual.

Now let us look at the last word of the title, **spiritual**. A spiritual person is one who has laid down the resistance that is natural in man and has given his life in submission to God and to others. Peter says, "... *Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God...*" (I Peter 5:5-6). Such a person

is not easily frustrated but is filled with love, regardless of the situation. He is one who does not delight in opposition and debate but seeks to understand all viewpoints so his mind can be open to the still, small voice who reveals God's way. "*And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves;...*" (II Timothy 2:24-25).


How often do we, as brethren, find that conservatism and liberalism drive away our spirituality? All of us have concerns that are real. None of us are wanting to throw away the faith once delivered to the saints. Paul writes: "*Hold fast the form of sound words, which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed unto thee by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us*" (II Timothy 1:13-14). Neither are any of us wanting to fall into the old way of living by law and sacrifices which "*can never take away sins*" (Hebrews 10:11b). These are both beautiful passages but if used to support the thinking of man they can bring disagreement.

By using these and like passages, it is possible to begin to justify thoughts, speech, and attitudes that are not of God. Why would we try to analyze our brother's light

according to his temperament, family, or congregation if we are really trying to open our minds to see the will of God? How often does the spirit of debate enter our discussions? Why do we want to bring up the “other side” of a thought if it was presented by one who thinks differently? Do we ever feel a sense of failure if our thoughts are not supported or a decision is made that is different from our thinking? Do we quickly think that the Church is losing direction just because our light is not followed? Why do we hear questions like: “Do we always have to submit to those who hold to the old ways?” or “...to those who are crowding the fence?” Do we often feel a little self-righteous rather than having a prayerful concern if we see a problem? Do we believe God’s Spirit will lead us differently from our brethren? Will He bring feelings of opposition? No! Man’s thinking will divide! God’s leading will unite! When each one yields to the other and gives himself in prayer to God, with his own will laid down, grace, trust, unity, and love will be found.

Can we understand that what we hold to be our strong points will very

likely be our downfall if not yielded in submission to the Spirit of God? Why do we so clearly see, and quickly point out, the dangers in another person’s way of thinking? Why do we see only the good in our own? Do we realize we are closest to the ditch on our side of the road? If my nature is to want to think conservatively, that is my greatest danger if I am not led by the Spirit. I must carefully guard against following my own thinking in this way. The same would apply if I am always reaching for more liberty. Then I must fear that danger above all others and carefully submit to the light of God and my brethren.

In conclusion, let us give our total allegiance to the leading of the Spirit and not to our own or to any other person’s way of thinking. Only when we welcome the light of others and take the good in each one and then lay this all before God in total submission, can we truly say we are led by the Spirit, or are spiritual. Then, in unity, the Church will endure the tests of time. 

*[Selected from the August 2023 issue of The Vindicator. This article originally appeared in the May 1997 issue of The Vindicator. Reprinted with permission.]*

If you remain *faithful* despite the odds, it helps people more than you’ll ever know.  
God somehow strengthens others by your *faithfulness*.

JONI E. TADA

January 2024



## marriages

*May the homes established by these marriages be little substations of heaven, where God reigns and His blessings flow.*

### Beachy-Detweiler

Bro. Dustin, son of Joe and Joanna Beachy, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Heather, daughter of Bob and Susan Detweiler, Auburn, KY, on May 13, 2023, at Providence Mennonite Fellowship by Jason Miller.

### Freeman-Yoder

Bro. Jadon, son of Abner and Eunice Freeman, Cynthiana, KY, and Sis. Carol, daughter of Reuben and Martha Yoder, Crossville, TN, on September 9, 2023, at Mt. Moriah Mennonite Church by John Ray Miller.

### Gerber-Gerber

Bro. Darren, son of Paul and Brenda Gerber, Gadshill, ON, and Sis. Loretta, daughter of Ralph and Bernice Gerber, Millbank, ON, on November 11, 2023, at Cedar Grove A.M. Church by John Gerber.

### Miller-Zook

Bro. Wynnston Jay, son of Daryl and Kay Miller, Grove City, MN, and Sis. Krista Zook, daughter of Tony and Martha Zook, Logan, MN, on October 21, 2023, at Evangelical Covenant Church for Black River Mennonite Church, International Falls, MN, by Glen Chupp.

### Overholt-Groff

Bro. Sheldon, son of Jonathan and Cheryl Overholt, Auburn, KY, and Sis. Meagan, daughter of Brad and Grace Groff, Auburn, KY, on November 11, 2023, at Providence Mennonite Fellowship for Franklin Mennonite Church by Jonathan Overholt.

### Yoder-Hostetler

Bro. Marcus, son of Noah and Fannie Yoder, Summertown, TN, and Sis. Abigail, daughter of Rudy Jr. and Sarah Hostetler, Burkesville, KY, on September 29, 2023, at Stony Point Baptist Church for Marrowbone Mennonite Church by Leroy Kauffman.



## cradle roll

*The children which the Lord hath graciously given . . . Genesis 33:5*

**Beachy**, Scott and Karissa (Sommers), Cumberland, MD, second child and son, Elias James, November 2, 2023.

**Beachy**, Steve and Crystal (Hostetler), Stone Creek, OH, first child and son, Kaiden Drew, October 24, 2023.

**Burkholder**, Conrad and Sherlyn (Nolt), Greensburg, PA, second child and daughter, Avery Song, November 7, 2023.

**Coblentz**, Michael and Joanne (Stoltzfus), Owenton, KY, fifth child, third daughter, Kylia Janae, September 27, 2023.



**Eash**, Benji and Charity (King), Waverly, TN, fourth child, second daughter, Myrtle Dawn, May 16, 2023.

**Gehman**, Delbert and Lydianna (Glogovsky), Churchville, VA, second child and son, Hayden Crewe, October 29, 2023.

**Graber**, Justin and Carolyn (Villalobos), Melvern, KS, seventh child, third daughter, Reina Celeste, October 29, 2023.

**Hershberger**, Chad and Lucinda (Schlabach), Winchester, OH, third child, second daughter, Ellie Hope, November 14, 2023.

**Hershberger**, Emery and Elizabeth (Stutzman), Owenton, KY, fifth child, second daughter, Brookelyn, October 21, 2023.

**Hershberger**, Mark and Emily (Miller), Stonecreek, OH, fifth child, third son, Benson Mark, November 14, 2023.

**Kinsinger**, Ivan and Lucinda (Miller), Oakland, MD, second child, first son, Theodore Jonas, November 7, 2023.

**Kuepfer**, Dale and Julia (Erb), Wellesley, ON, second child and daughter, Alisha Faith, November 14, 2023.

**Lengacher**, Nelson and Krista (Coblentz), Lexington, IN, fifth child, third daughter, Adilee Grace, November 2, 2023.

**Miller**, Kevin and Angela (Mast), Auburn, KY, second child, first daughter, Marcie Lanae, October 5, 2023.

**Miller**, Ryan and Karen (Miller), Wellman, IA, second child and son, Ryker Wyatt, September 7, 2023.

**Peachey**, Justus and Veronica (Overholt), Franklin, KY, second child, first daughter, Shakira Brooke, October 10, 2023.

**Ramer**, Kendric and Tara (Miller), Nappanee, IN, second child and son, Clayton Oaks, November 12, 2023.

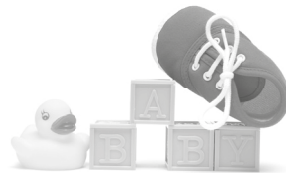
**Sommers**, Joel and Esther (Stoltzfus), Thailand, second child, first daughter, Aspen Jade, November 10, 2023.

**Stoltzfoos**, Brad and Debbie (Yoder), Kalona, IA, second child and daughter, Hazel Anne, November 4, 2023.

**Stoltzfoos**, Steve and Mary Sue (Beiler), Ickesburg, PA, seventh child, fifth son, Zadok Rafael, November 7, 2023.

**Strite**, Dallas and Stephanie (Weaver), Covington, TX, first child and son, Anson John, September 13, 2023.

**Swartzentruber**, Jason and Rachel (Kauffman), Bittinger, MD, fourth child, third son, Jesse Jay, November 4, 2023.



**Ulrich**, Ivan and Jessica (Yoder), Keene, TX, third child, second son, Theodore Archer, September 10, 2023.

**Weirich**, Joel and Stephanie (Yoder), Aroda, VA, fifth child, fourth son, Liam Emmett, November 15, 2023.

**Yoder**, Chris and Charla (Funk), Oskaloosa, KS, fifth child, third daughter, Serena Nicole, November 25, 2023.

**Yoder**, James and Heidi (Mast), Hutchinson, KS, second child and son, Valentine Jude, November 16, 2023.

## ordinations

*May the grace of God be upon our brothers as they minister faithfully. Let us pray for them.*

**Bro. Milt Kinsinger**, 49, (wife, Faith Yoder), Lexington, IN, was ordained bishop for Living Waters Mennonite Church on October 22, 2023. Preordination messages were given by Mark Miller. The charge was given by Floyd Lengacher, assisted by Josh Yoder and David Nissley.

**Bro. Eldon Peachey**, 57, (wife, Roxanne Byers), Augusta, WV, was chosen by the church and ordained minister for Slanesville Community Mennonite Church, Slanesville WV, on June 4, 2023. Preordination messages were given by Simon Schrock. The charge was given by Dan Stoltzfus, assisted by Wayne Lapp and Dave Beiler.

**Yoder**, Kristoph and Regina (Hershberger), Oakland, MD, third child and daughter, Avery Elise, November 4, 2023.

**Yoder**, Mark and Ellen (Helmuth), Cumberland Furnace, TN, fourth child, third son (one son in heaven), Jenson Sterling, October 5, 2023.

**Yoder**, Sanford and Loretta (Hochstetler), Itasca, TX, third child, first son, Quinlan Titus, November 8, 2023.

**Yoder**, Steve and Marita (Sommers), Salisbury, PA, fourth child, second daughter, Eliana Joy, November 14, 2023.



**Bro. Elam Stoltzfoos**, 60, (wife, Loretta Bontrager), Kalona, IA, was ordained deacon for the Sharon Bethel Mennonite Church, Kalona, IA, on September 24, 2023. Preordination messages were given by various speakers. The charge was given by Delmar Bontrager, assisted by Leighton Yoder and Lavon Bontrager. Kevin Beachy, Justin Miller, and Hans Hostetler shared the lot.

**Bro. Michael Stoltzfus**, 35, (wife, Anita Beiler), Taylorsville, NC, was ordained minister for Dayspring Christian Fellowship on November 12, 2023. The charge was given by Virgil Kanagy, assisted by Ben Stoltzfus and Aaron Garber. Shaphan Stoltzfus and Chriss McGrath shared the lot.



**Coblentz**, Jonathan A., 45, of Owenton, KY, passed away on October 13, 2023, at St. Elizabeth Hospital in Edgewood, KY, after a 13 ½ month battle with papillary renal cell carcinoma. He was born August 12, 1978, in Meadville, PA, to Andy and Clara Mae (Nisley) Coblentz. He was married to Loretta Faye Helmuth on November 9, 2007.

Left to cherish his memory are his wife, Loretta Faye, his children: Ryan Andrew (14), Alayna Brooke (12), Austin Glen (8), and Jennalyn Rose (5); parents, Andy and Clara Mae Coblentz; brothers: Leon (Kaylene Miller) and Michael (Joanne Stoltzfus); sisters, Sharon and Cheryl, all of Owenton; parents-in-law, Glen and Rosanna (Herschberger) Helmuth; brothers-in-law, Darrell (Regina Troyer) Helmuth, Fredonia; Galen (Edith Beachy) Helmuth, Belvidere, TN; sisters-in-law, Juanita (Alfred) Beachy, Belvidere, TN, Melody (Micah) Wadel, Greencastle, PA; nieces and nephews; grandmother, Ada Nisley; grandfather, Jonas Coblentz; aunts, uncles, many cousins, and a host of friends.

Jonathan's family lived on a farm in Connersville, PA, until they moved to Leitchfield, KY, when he was 17. About three years after his marriage to Loretta, he moved his family to the Owenton, KY, outreach in September 2010.

Since then he's enjoyed his work at Owenton Barn and Metal Sales where he met and learned to know and appreciate

many friends within the Owen County community.

He has always appreciated the rich fellowship of his church family, but since his journey with cancer, they became more precious to him. His favorite verse through this was John 14:27 (KJV) and a favorite song, "It's In The Savior's Hands," which says, "There will be grace.."

The funeral was held on October 16, 2023, at the Owenton Amish Mennonite Church with Joshua Yoder officiating. Burial followed at the church cemetery.

**Eash**, Orpha, 81, of Cumberland Furnace, TN, died peacefully on March 10, 2023, at her home. Orpha was born April 24, 1941, in Honeyville, IN, to the late Levi D. and Elizabeth A. (Schlabach) Bontrager. She was married to Wilbur LaVern Eash on November 10, 1959. He survives.

Orpha was a member of the Locust Creek Mennonite Church in Linneus, MO. She had a servant heart. She loved gardening and took pleasure in tending her beautiful flowers.

She is survived by children: LaVerda (Peter) Snellman, McConnelsville, OH; LaVern (Carolyn), Cumberland Furnace; Jerry (Vera), Fairfield, MT; Maudene (Freeman) Miller, Farmington, MO; Marlin (Doris), Burkesville, KY; Jonnie (Freda), Plain City, OH; Lonnie (Leona), Wellston, OH; Ronnie, Plain City, OH; and Kenneth (Becky), Auburn, KY. Orpha

was blessed with 55 grandchildren and 121 great-grandchildren. Also surviving are four sisters and five brothers.

She was preceded in death by a daughter, Kathy, and one great-grandson, Daxton Cass.

The funeral was held March 14, 2023, at Lighthouse Mennonite Church, Vanleer, TN, with Julian Eash, Paul Overholt, and Clayton Weaver officiating. Burial was at the church cemetery.

**Schrock**, Marjorie A., 59, of Kokomo, IN, passed away at her home on September 22, 2023. She was born April 27, 1964, in Kokomo, to Alvin and Viola Miller. On April 27, 1985, she married Larry Schrock, and he survives.

Marjorie was a loving homemaker and worked together with her family in the family business. She was an active member of Bethany Fellowship Church.

In addition to her husband, survivors include her children: Lynetta, Lyndon, Lyneice, Matthew, Marion (Jennifer), Marilyn; siblings: Darlene (Lloyd) Herschberger, Kathryn (Ray) Herschberger, Lavern (Rosemary) Miller, Pauline (Dan) Troyer, and Raymond (Kathy) Miller.

She was preceded in death by her parents and nephew, Dennis Herschberger.

The funeral service was held on September 25, 2023, at Bethany Fellowship School, Kokomo, with Darlton Bontrager officiating. Burial followed in the Christner Cemetery.

**Yoder**, David Timothy, Jr., 84, of Culpeper, VA, passed away at home on October 12, 2023. David was born August 17, 1939, in Belleville, PA, to David T. and Elsie (Kurtz) Yoder.

As a young adult, David felt the call to serve at Friedensheim in West Berlin, Germany, during the time of the Berlin Wall and refugee crisis. There he met Marie Yoder, who was also serving in West Berlin. They married in Germany on June 25, 1971. After seven years in Germany, David and Marie settled in Aroda, VA, where David taught school at Oak Grove Mennonite School and worked as a carpenter and farmer. In 1986, David and his family moved to Faith Mission Home where he served as a house dad and as assistant administrator. In 1992, David and his family moved to Suceava, Romania, where he helped pioneer the startup of Nathanel Christian Orphanage. After this season, David and his family moved to Stanardsville, VA, where he owned and managed a suspender business until he retired. He was a faithful member of Faith Mission Fellowship. David left a legacy of serving others and his heart of kindness touched many people.

David is survived by his wife of 52 years, Marie Yoder, and four children: William "Willie," Free Union; Twila (Michael) Jantzi, Kyiv, UA; Bettina Yoder, New Holland, PA; Jotham Yoder, Harrisonburg; and six grandchildren: Chadwick, Alyssa, Kiana, Elliot, Yanik, and Kyrell Jantzi. He is also survived by three brothers and two sisters:

Enos (Rebecca) Yoder, Reedsville, PA; Raymond (Linda) Yoder, Mannsville, NY; Harvey (Nancy) Yoder, Belleville, PA; Mary (Ray) Beachy, Liberty, KY; Barbara (Lester) Beachy, Columbia, KY; and Rhoda (David) Yoder, Hickory, KY.

He was preceded in death by two sisters: Amanda Yoder and Martha

Yoder; one brother, Jesse Yoder; and four in-laws.

The funeral service was held at Faith Mission Fellowship on October 17, 2023, with Jonathan Martin officiating. Interment followed at Mission Home Cemetery.



## observations

**G**eoffrey Holt, from Hinsdale, New Hampshire, passed away earlier this year. Since his passing he has become rather famous. School was difficult for Geoffrey, at least partly, due to his dyslexia. He was married for a short time as a young man, but had no children. In the 1980s when his employer, Agway Corporation, closed, he received a cash settlement that he chose to invest.

Mr. Holt was a quiet and reserved man who preferred staying in the background and out of the limelight. He was also unusual in that he didn't spend much money on personal luxuries. When he passed away he possessed an extensive collection of model cars and trains, but very little in the way of personal amenities. He worked as a custodian in a trailer park and lived in one of the trailer homes. He didn't own a vehicle or

a television. His preferred mode of transportation was a lawn mower that he used to move around his small hometown to attend to the errands and chores that comprised his routine. A stroke in 2021 and the following complications necessitated a move to assisted living, then to full nursing care prior to his passing.

Between 10 and 15 years ago, he confided to Smokey Smith, a good friend and the owner of the trailer park where Holt lived and worked, that his investments had done better for him than he expected and he wasn't quite sure what to do with the money he had accumulated. Holt had no descendants. Smith encouraged him to remember his small hometown and community. Nothing more was discussed about this between them since that time. Smith was named the executor of his estate and was very surprised

upon Holt's passing to learn that Holt had bequeathed the community of Hinsdale, New Hampshire, with his entire estate, valued at an eye-popping 3.8 million dollars! Mr. Holt didn't have a large social circle. Those in that circle didn't suspect that this unassuming individual was such a rich man.

The custodians of this large gift seem eager to use these resources in a way that honors the frugality, outward focus, and priorities that marked Geoffrey Holt's life. Libraries, updated voting machines, and teachers' training to facilitate learning for those with dyslexia are just a few of the ideas that have been tossed around so far.

Those who knew Geoffrey Holt suspect that he would be embarrassed by all the attention he is receiving posthumously. If people would have known about his personal financial pool, they might have treated him a bit differently. To the degree this is accurate, this is a sad commentary on the way that human behavior and interactions are colored by the perceived influence that monetary resources bring. It seems pretty obvious that Holt was more comfortable living out of the limelight and without the added scrutiny and attention that knowledge of his fortune would have brought.

• • • • •

Tommy and Virginia Stevens were married in 1954. They raised two children and spent their lives investing in the relationships with their children and grandchildren. Earlier this year, Tommy was hospitalized with breathing difficulties. He was soon moved to palliative care when it became apparent that his breathing difficulties were not likely to improve. Soon after that, his wife fell and needed to be hospitalized for the broken ribs, spinal fracture, and injured hip associated with her fall. The family suggested in jest that Virginia was just lonely for her husband and this was her way of being by his side. They ended up together in the hospital, holding hands and very pleased to be in each other's company again. The joy of the reunion was overshadowed by the awareness that time together was winding down. One day before their 69<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary, Tommy passed away. Nine days later his wife also died. I'm impressed by the example of love for life and each other that Tommy and Virginia left to those who knew them. Both Tommy and Virginia were age 91 when they died.

• • • • •

My impression as a child was that 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries were

unusual and rather remarkable. But a combination of factors has made the observance of this milestone more common than it used to be. The increase in overall life-expectancy is probably the single greatest contributor to the proliferation of long marriages in conservative Anabaptist settings. The low incidence of divorce has long been a hallmark of our faith community. Let's keep it that way.

However, while the commitment to staying together is very, very important, we should do more than just stay together. We who are married should never lose sight of the fact that increased years and experience should be accompanied by increased nurture and growth in the marriage relationship. What a sad situation it would be for a married couple to rightly stay together but not to enjoy the fruits of harmonious and unselfish care for one another.

• • • • •

I am very grateful for the many examples that I've observed within our own faith community of marital fidelity, accompanied by unapologetic mutual affection for one another among those who are older than we are. To those who are such good examples, I say, "Keep it up." We younger folks really benefit when we observe the faithful examples of

those older than we; the example of marital fidelity, mutual care for one another, and the demonstration of the enjoyment of a life together.

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Several months ago, I mentioned in this column the 77<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary of former President Jimmy Carter and his wife Rosalynn this past summer. Rosalynn passed away on November 19, 2023.

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Melissa S. Kearney's book, *The Two Parent Privilege: How Americans Stopped Getting Married and Started Falling Behind*, has generated intense discussion in the USA and abroad. Those discussing the book seem to agree that Kearney cites robust data that shows again and again that children who grow up in stable two-parent homes experience a broad range of advantages over their peers who do not experience that advantage. These benefits include social, emotional, and financial benefits. I've not read the book but would like to offer a few musings relative to the premise and title.

- Many who are not married did not choose to be single. Singleness is experienced by men and women for a variety of reasons. Not nearly all of those are wrong choices. Let's be careful that our conversations regarding the benefits of marriage and

two-parent homes are undergirded with this awareness.

- The statistical evidence that children who grow up in two-parent homes experience many advantages is widely accepted and acknowledged. (I'm not citing those statistics here.)

- Very few people have the opportunity to choose whether they grow up in single-parent settings or in two-parent homes. This awareness should inform how we relate to one another.

- Single-parent homes might be the result of divorce or separation of the parents or the death of one of the parents.

- Healthy two-parent homes require the commitment of both parents. In many cases, one parent would like to stay together but the other is unwilling to do so.

- In a general sense, the blessing of the Lord follows where people choose God's plan. This doesn't mean that the blessing is always measurable or limited to God's people. But our awareness of how faithfulness to God's plan brings His blessing helps to sharpen our awareness and enjoyment of those blessings.

- The social, emotional, and financial blessings that are experienced by those who grow up in two-parent homes bring with them a corresponding stewardship

responsibility. There is very little, nothing actually, that we possess that has not been given to us somehow and in some way. Let's be good stewards of the same.

- In most of our communities, Anabaptists are seen as making a positive contribution to the community. The component of Christian faith is part of this picture. A related but separate component is the fact that almost all of us have grown up in two-parent homes. This benefit is difficult to measure, but probably carries more weight than I've given it in the past.

- Standardized test scores for elementary school children are better for students in two-parent settings than single-parent settings. Often standardized test scores are also better for our private Christian schools than public schools in the surrounding community. One former educator with whom I've spoken about this phenomenon suggests that this might be more indicative of the stability of our homes than it is of the quality of our private education.

- One of the most important things we can pass along to our children as a church community is a commitment to the permanence of marriage and a legacy of joyful marital harmony in the community of believers.

—RJM 



# Left and Right: We Are Not of This World

*Hans Mast, Hutchinson, KS*

I have two news snippets to share about the corruption that happens to basic Christian teaching when we are captured by the left-wing or right-wing political parties.

According to Gallup, in 2001 and 2002, 70% of both blacks and whites said race relations were good. That was peak agreement and it ranged around within about 10% of that until 2013 where the numbers were 72% and 66% for whites and blacks.

That's also the year BLM was founded. The "hands up, don't shoot" Michael Brown lie in Ferguson happened in 2014. Ever since, activists have done their best to stir up racial hatred by highlighting the behavior of a small minority of criminals who act badly toward police and an even smaller minority of police who act badly toward people. (They pretend to only highlight the latter, but they often choose to highlight stories where really terrible people are violently resisting arrest, raising the profile of minority criminality as well.)

In the process, they've mainstreamed crime (especially shoplifting) among

the black community and made it a part of their cultural identity with roving bands of thugs ransacking stores in liberal communities where not prosecuting blacks' criminal behavior is seen as an essential tenet of racial justice. Shoplifting from large corporations is seen as a good way to redistribute wealth from the bad guys to the good guys. Evil is good, good is evil.

The New York Times recently ran an opinion piece blaming Korean corporate giants for the wave of car thefts perpetuated mainly by black youths: "Kia and Hyundai Helped Enable a Crime Wave. They Should Pay for It." Their sin? Not making their cars harder to steal. It's not the fault of the people who made a moral choice to steal, it's the fault of the corporations for not making it harder.

And in the meantime, CVS and Walgreens put huge portions of their store shelves in rough neighborhoods behind lock and key and are also closing many stores, raising the cost of living for poor folks . . . the very same poor folks that these policies of evil and chaos are supposedly helping.

Fortunately, not all liberals are in support of these crazy policies. There is a powerful backlash brewing among the tech executive liberal elite who have the practicality to realize how harmful these policies are for those they're supposed to be helping. Garry Tan is a San Francisco-native tech venture capitalist who is one of my favorites.

We know that evil folks without Christ will trend toward self-destructive behaviors, so these patterns should not surprise us. And we are not called to intervene with the coercive power of government to try to stop them. However, the least we can do is to be clear-eyed about the basic principles of right and wrong and not fall for their deceptively-phrased arguments and actually support their policies and philosophies, as some on the Christian left have sadly done.

On the other side of the aisle, the conservative Christian church has been so thoroughly captured by right-wing politics that many will blatantly reject the teachings of Jesus when it doesn't fit their aggressive politics of self-defense.

Russell Moore, formerly a top leader of the Southern Baptist Convention who had to resign due to the aggressive and anti-Christ, pro-Trump stance of SBC churches,

said the following in an interview with NPR where he explained how he realized evangelicalism is in crisis: "It was the result of having multiple pastors tell me, essentially, the same story about quoting the Sermon on the Mount, parenthetically, in their preaching—'turn the other cheek'—[and] to have someone come up afterward to say, 'Where did you get those liberal talking points?' And what was alarming to me is that in most of these scenarios, when the pastor would say, 'I'm literally quoting Jesus Christ,' the response would not be, 'I apologize.' The response would be, 'Yes, but that doesn't work anymore. That's weak.' And when we get to the point where the teachings of Jesus Himself are seen as subversive to us, then we're in a crisis."

Moore gives the following excellent advice on how to fix the problem, "I don't think we fix it by fighting a war for the soul of evangelicalism. I really don't think we can fix it at the movement level. And that's one of the reasons why, when I'm talking to Christians who are concerned about this, my counsel is always 'small and local.' I think we have to do something different and show a different way. And I see in history every time that something renewing and reviving has happened, it's

happened that way. It's happened at a small level with people simply refusing to go with the stream of the church culture at the time."

Ultimately, while it can be more satisfying to dunk on the atheists and a small minority of church folks who go along with the evil left-wing propaganda, it is far more essential for us to be aware of the things that more easily beset the majority of conservative readers to whom I write.


I know many of you are probably weary of hearing this message approached through the lens of various current headlines every few months, but I sincerely believe that few issues connected to current events have more impact on the United State church's integrity than being captured by political ideologies with their many tenets at odds with the teachings of Jesus.

Even the very concept of politicking was denounced by Paul when he spoke about eritheia ("selfish ambition" or Thayer's Greek Definitions: "electioneering or intriguing for office") and hupokrisis (an actor who plays a role on the outside that is very

different than their inner lives) in Galatians 2:13 and Philippians 2:3.

Political winds do have an impact on the church and our lives and we need to understand what's going on, but 99% of how we hear it discussed is not from the perspective of a faithful, kingdom Christian. It's designed to get us involved in that coercion-based, dishonesty-based political process. And that 99% of narratives is filled with a lot of subtle, deliberate deceptions to sabotage the church.

—Sources: Gallup, Wikipedia, Twitter, NPR, New York Times

As always, I welcome your feedback (or requests for PDFs of linked articles for those without Internet access) to [hansmast@hansmast.com](mailto:hansmast@hansmast.com). Furthermore, I remind you that quotes and links are not to be swallowed whole, but rather to be subject to discretion as always, taking the good and ignoring/learning from the incorrect. —Hans Mast 

*[This article was first published in the November 2023 issue of Sword and Trumpet. Used with permission.]*

I will speak ill of no man and speak all the **good** of everybody.

Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain, and most do.

It takes character and self-control to be **understanding** and **forgiving**.

-BEN FRANKLIN

### A Freckled Saint

*Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS*

**W**e were attending the wedding of a friend. I was seated in the choir loft, a truly advantageous spot for people-watching. Family and friends of bride and groom trickled into the four wedges of pews as directed by the ushers. As you would expect, the gathering included both familiar and unfamiliar faces.



During the service, I allowed myself what I hope was discreet observing. In the back was a young man in a wheelchair, his young bride beside him. In the front, nieces and nephews of the bridal pair whiled away the time, or whined about the time. In observing the crowd, one individual caught my attention during the sermon. Both hands were cupped over his ears, the better to hear with. His faded blue eyes were fixed with grave attention on the speaker. He leaned forward in his seat, his whole bearing intent. Beside him, his cane and his bride of 64 years. I knew him, this freckled and aged saint.

What was it that captured my heart that day? Not so much the wonder of new love in the bride and groom, but the steady, tried love in a wrinkled pair. The wonder of a saint approaching an 88<sup>th</sup> birthday on the edge of his seat at the wedding of a friend.

*That, my friends, is beautiful.* 

### Spirituality vs. Legalism

*Alfredo Mullet, Chilton, TX*

**T**here is a sinister spirit that has invaded our conservative Mennonite churches. It is

this: submitting oneself to rules and regulations of dress and conduct is automatically labeled as legalism.

What is implied is that any law structure is an infringement on one's personal freedom. Essentially, law is bad. This is evident testimony that, as a church, we have not taught properly on this subject. We have allowed ourselves to be pushed from one side of the issue to the other; we see that a heavy law hand of one generation tends to legalism, so, in reaction, the next generation backs off on enforcing regulations. Oh yes, we still keep the law in the books, but we overlook infringements for fear of being labeled, legalists.

The fact is that both extremes, chafing under rules and harshly enforcing them, are unequivocal evidences of legalism. Legalism is the obsession about rules and regulations, either for or against law. In other words, law becomes the primary heart of one's life. Indeed, the signs of legalism are sacrifice without satisfaction and holiness without happiness. These people consider it their job to legally police others publicly while secretly making allowances for personal self-indulgences.

In contrast, true spirituality never centers its attention on law, but rather on the spirit and purpose behind law. These understand that the purpose of the Law (the moral code given on Mount Sinai) is to expose the disparity between the holiness of God and the

sinfulness of humankind. In their minds, it becomes a matter of morality versus immorality from the Creator's moral-nature viewpoint. Moreover, these people judge themselves in relation to God's holiness instead of the sinfulness of fellow humans. Therefore, the human authority structures do not have to become more holy; no, instead, these concentrate on their personal sanctification!

Now then, if we are walking this spiritually, higher moral road, does this mean that we are exempt from submission to earthly institutions of authority? Not at all! In fact, we become the most humbly submissive and meekly obedient members under human authority structures. I know this sounds contradictory to the pseudo-spiritual idea of freedom in Christ. But the reality is that only truly spiritual individuals are able to ungrudgingly submit to any ruling establishment. But a caveat is in order here: this submission is not to be confused with being a push-over. The truth is that this submission is actually an evidence of Holy Spirit power. It takes more inner fortitude to submit to imperfect human authority (authority is perfect because it is God's design; the human in authority is imperfect) than to rebel against it!

Thus, the constant tension that exists within the church, too many

rules versus not enough rules, is a clear testimony of legalism. Genuinely spiritual people concern themselves with God's morality within. Because these are so in tune with the Holy Spirit, they will impose rules of appearance and conduct on themselves irrespective of religious cultural traditions and in spite of loose morals within the church, in an effort to live out God's holiness. Fundamentally, they do not need

ecclesiastical restrictions to avoid sin or church permission to express God's holy and loving nature.

Finally, the truth is that only such individuals who can willingly subject themselves under less than ideal church leadership and readily work with imperfect fellow congregants really have any authority to speak doctrine, rebuke, correction, and instruction into the Body of Christ!



## mission awareness

# An Encouragement to Attend a Bible School

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

**C**onsider attending a winter Bible School. If you are married, take your wife and family along. Hundreds of young people sat in the classrooms of the brick vacated school building. It was during the 1960s when the writer attended Messiah Bible School three different years. God's presence was keenly felt. Here is where consciences were sharpened by sound doctrinal and practical teaching from God's Holy Word. There were disciplined study, fervent prayer, and fasting that resulted in Spirit-sent revivals. Confessions were genuine and frequent. Demons were cast out. Testimonies of Christian victory

were spontaneous. The four-part singing was heavenly! Life-long godly convictions were firmly established by the Holy Spirit.

Messiah Bible School began in the early 1960s in Hartville, OH, under the direction of the Conservative Mennonite (non-conference) Fellowship. Then in 1963 it was held in Carbon Hill, OH. Later MBS was directed by the Nationwide Mennonite Fellowship and continues under that body of churches to this present time.

In some terms during those early years at Messiah Bible School, around 60% of the students were from Beachy churches. The wheels of the minds of several Amish Mennonite teachers at

MBS were churning (namely Willie Wagler and Ervin Hershberger), and discussion was entertained to start a similar Bible School under the Beachy constituency. Calvary Bible School organized in 1969. The opening date was December 29, 1969, in a vacated Mennonite mission school building deep in the Ozarks in a community called Culp, Arkansas.

Yesterday, I talked with Fred and Rhoda Miller from Cabins, WV. Fred is a retired pastor in this mission setting and has been heavily involved in the Christian Light Education for many years. Fred is a graduate of Eastern Mennonite College and Rhoda attended a six-week Bible School associated with EMC. Their daughter, Linda, attended both Messiah and Numidia Bible Schools. Interestingly, Fred and Rhoda observed that both of these winter Bible Schools were patterned after (especially in relation to the Bible courses and subjects offered and in some of the standards) the six-week Bible School term held on the premises of EMC. This was in the early years when that institution was sound in biblical faith and practice. CBS patterned closely in the daily schedule, subjects offered, and standards of MBS in those early years.

Here are some recollections from “The Principal’s Pen” (*Calvary*

*Clarion*, 2009): “This is the fortieth year of Calvary Bible School. The tight-knit community of those first years bring us many good memories. For example, consider the dormitory space. There were three different buildings used for the men. The one, still known as the Grasse Cabin, which for many years has served as a house of the principal and his wife, held 22 men with only one bathroom with a toilet, a sink, and a shower. In the first year, 1970, the young men would cut their own firewood for heat. Then there was the Brown Cabin that held 12 men and sometime later the clinic building in the back of Bethel Springs Church was also used as a men’s dormitory. Now the new men’s dormitory has ten rooms, each facilitating four to six men. Each room has its own restroom and shower. The ladies have moved from the (oh, it really cannot be described) ‘unique, creaky upstairs’ to a homey facility just north of the main building. Much planning, labor, and money have been invested in these facilities through the years to make life more comfortable.

“Some things never change at CBS. The worshipful experience of the four-part harmonious singing in the old chapel, the hunger for God’s Word, students verbalizing their testimonies of what the Lord has

been doing in their lives, confession of sins, and unexpected revivals breaking out by the Holy Spirit, new commitments made by many in surrendering their lives for Christian service, thought-provoking class discussions, completing homework assignments, and much more.”

We read of the Tyrannus Bible School during the time of the early church in Ephesus. The Apostle Paul was the principal-teacher. No doubt, the members of Paul’s missionary team were also instructors. The setting was in the synagogue. Paul spoke boldly concerning the kingdom of God. Many hardened their hearts and refused to believe and *“spoke evil of that way before the multitude.”* Paul *“departed from them, and separated the disciples, disputing daily in the school of one Tyrannus. And this continued by the space of two years; so that all they that dwelt in Asia heard the word of*

*the Lord Jesus, both Jews and Greeks”* (Acts 19:8-10). A marvelous revival broke out in that Bible School from the powerful teaching of God’s Word. The name of Jesus was magnified! The people confessed their evil deeds. They brought their books of curious arts and burned them before all. See Acts 19:17-21.

Area-wide, regional, and Cornerstone Bible Schools have ministered to hundreds of students and are a substantial blessing in establishing Bible-based convictions. I see a list of 14 Bible Schools or Institutes in the Mennonite Church Directory published by CLP. Bible schools have been deeply appreciated in Central America, Africa, and other lands across the globe.

There is little growth inside a shell. Broaden your horizons. Stretch your wings. Enjoy a term at a winter Bible school.



## A Woman After God’s Heart

### Women Preachers?

*Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH*



**T**he days on the calendar don’t match my lengthy to-do list scribbled in the margin. Guests called today, asking for space

on our congested schedule. My husband’s comments at the supper table trouble me, and I can’t let it go. Does it make a difference if I pray or



if I don't? What shapes our future if we continue making choices based on this worldview? My daughter's continual ear infections are no way to live. We've got to find answers for our loved one's care. What did my church sister mean when she said that? Troubled thoughts fall over each other, grasping for attention from my tired brain. Can I find a switch to turn off this craziness?

In this formula-happy, quick fix, DIY world, we've learned how to google for answers, clicking on the next video to show us how to fix the washer, illustrate a new knitting stitch, or how to fancy-fold a dinner napkin. But we researched long before Google in the sense that we've sought for quick fixes and illusive answers to pretty much everything. Some of us remember books like: *Fascinating Womanhood* and *How to Win Friends and Influence People* and the endless list of guides on how to do life.

Sisters, we have the Book and the One Who helps us understand it, the Holy Spirit! By the merciful provision of Jesus Christ, we own the *how-to formula*. I feel grossly inadequate when trying to explain how life-changing this principle really is, but even so, I'll call this my *review*. We could title this plan: *How to Think Intentionally*. At the risk of being overly simplistic, it gives us the recipe

for a life filled with God's peace.

Philippians 4:7 talks about the peace of God mounting guard over our hearts and minds. This peace surpasses all understanding. The Amplified says it this way: "that tranquil state of a soul assured of its salvation through Christ and so fearing nothing from God and being content with its earthly lot of whatever sort that is."

The next verse gives the how-to prescription, or break-down method for this all-important process of getting from troubled chaos to a place of peace. We are instructed to think on, to weigh, and take account of all that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, of excellence, or praiseworthy. And then we are to practice and model what we've learned, AND THE GOD OF PEACE (untroubled, undisturbed well-being) WILL BE WITH US. This verse does not elaborate on ways to change the people around us, or about the eradication of evil. The change occurs in *me*. The peace of God guards *my* heart and mind.

New thought patterns are formed one thought at a time until they actually become new thinking habits. It is not enough to cast out the wrong ideas and thoughts, but unless that **space is filled** with God-thoughts, our default mode is back to the rut,

just like a vehicle can easily slip into a worn groove. I'm intrigued sometimes by the actual process and think about the proverbial egg and chicken and which came first. What's the order here? Do my new thinking patterns develop *after* I put away the anxious and selfish, or does the transformation occur as I first intentionally put on, thus robbing the space from the old and fearful? I remember a preacher once illustrating the process of letting go of the old and replacing it with God-thinking. He asked us to visualize a bucket filled with mud and garbage. When one dips out of the top scoopful by scoopful, the process seems wearying and hopeless. However, if one inserts a high-pressure water hose at the bottom, the actual filling with fresh clean water clearly eliminates the mud, even as it fills.

Observing my husband has presented me with an effective example of choosing what to think. While this may be a male/female difference, I think we relationally-intertwined, spaghetti-brained ladies can learn from them. It seems like they can *put an issue into a box*, lay it aside, and refuse to pick it up again if they are not part of the problem or solution.

For too long I reasoned that I was the victim of my thoughts. By the mercy of God, I have begun to realize

that I get to choose my thoughts. I can either listen to myself, or I can **preach to myself**. I choose.

In conclusion, I'll link you to one of my prayers while processing troubled thoughts during a winter night. It illustrates the spiritual journey when ruts of desperation convert to godly mental pathways. It's about **preaching to myself**. Come with me in this quest for the peace that passes understanding!

*Lord, Jesus, I long to be perfectly whole.*

The words of this hymn, Lord, carry to You—the intensity of my desires tonight. I am fractured, but You, oh Lord, are Wholeness. My arms reach out to You so that my undoneness can find expression. Sleep eludes me. It's dark out and it's oh, so dark inside, Lord. Longing is a hopeful word to me at this moment. This song is giving me a place to go with my neediness, my hunger, yea, the aching of my soul, begs to find its wholeness in You.

*I want Thee forever to live in my soul.*

Would there be something like answering this question for always and always? Could You, would You, come to live inside of me forever? I desire to be Your abode in every way possible. I want every cell of my being to beat with Your lifeblood. May Your thoughts be thought through

my mind. May Your character find expression in my hands and feet. May all who see me, glimpse You, Lord Jesus.

*Break down every idol.*

Ah, I see it now. This complete takeover comes with severities. You, the Sovereign of completeness and supremacy, will not take residence alongside even a whisper of competition. In my soul, it must be all God or none at all. Break them down, my God and Lord. I desire none and no one beside You. And if any lurk around the edges, trying to hide outside of my knowledge, tear them down unconditionally.

*Cast out every foe.*

I have those personal ambitions, I know, that would struggle and resist this complete God-takeover and conquest. I've sheltered small enemy encampments that persistently stage a dispute, squatters that they are. They militate against wholeness, promising only illusionary imitations. They are prideful, seeking my own agenda. Cast them out, Lord. Bar them from reentry.

*Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

You speak of yet one more step in the process? Like a washing? Ah, that there could be a forever-washing. Does this process leave any possibility for the survival of even

one speck of selfishness? You break down and cast out. Then You wash. I am beginning to see how involved this process becomes. But I welcome it. I do, Lord Jesus. Because it's Your wholeness I so desperately crave.

*Whiter, than snow, yes, whiter than snow,*

I get it! The visual image of newly fallen snow. A blanket of unsullied white, quietly filtering into every tiny niche and crevice of my being. First, idols are broken down and cast out, then I am washed, and now covered in white. I will to be a recipient of this holy operation.

*Now wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.*

I speak to my fractured identity and anxious sleeplessness—step aside, go away! I begin to see what it looks like to experience Your wholeness, Lord Jesus. My body, soul, and spirit find rest as I contemplate first the rending and destruction, then the cleansing and covering. The process feels loud and clamorous, yet it happens soundlessly, in the quiet of the night. You are a God Who sends us pictures to show us what You mean. The unspoiled white snow and this silent processing, remind me how You infuse Your identity and wholeness onto my personal scrubby landscape. Filled and covered with Your whiteness and wholeness, I am at rest.



## God Loves Them All

*Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

In this new year, remember that every person is important, loved by God, and worthy of respect.

### **Make Me an Angel**

Emma, an elderly lady with Alzheimer's, was fortunate when Mary Jane moved in to care for her. Mary Jane did her best to cook and attend to Emma's needs. She brightened the elderly lady's days. Singing brought Emma comfort. Mary Jane sang. Old familiar hymns were favorites. Emma would fall asleep, comforted by the words of the hymns. Every day Mary Jane read the Bible for Emma. Every day Emma would open her Bible and hold it on her lap. She loved God's Word and had loved it for many years.

After eight months when care became too difficult, Emma was moved to Walnut Hills Nursing Home.

Visiting Emma was a priority for Mary Jane. On her very last visit, Mary Jane asked if they could pray together.

Right away, Emma started to pray.

"Lord, help me to..." Then she would pause and repeat. "Lord, help me to..."

"Should I help Emma pray?" wondered Mary Jane. She decided to just quietly wait.

Emma again said, "Lord help me to...to be an angel!" Then she added, "Lord, how long is it that I have to wait for you to call me home?" Emma was so ready to go home.

Mary Jane was touched at the beauty of this sincere prayer. Then she prayed, "Our Father God, please give Emma grace and patience till You call her home."

It was not very many days after those beautiful prayers that God gave Emma her heart's desire to go home.

Post script: Emma had been a widow for many years. Her husband died in an accident at age 29, leaving Emma with five small children. Emma held on to faith in God through all the difficulties of widowhood.

Mary Jane recently commented, "Emma is where she longed to be, with her Lord. I can picture her, an angel, singing in the heavenly choir."

## The Cleaning Lady's Name

A young college student was studying hard for his final exam. He was surprised when he got the test to see a plain piece of paper, blank on both sides.

The professor told his class that he had taught them everything he could about business in their class. The most important question for this test was, "What is the name of the lady who cleans this building?"

No one in the class knew. The whole class failed the exam.

One of the students had a perfect grade point average before that test. Instead of being bitter over his grade, he chose to learn. He stated, "That was the only test I ever failed. The cleaning lady's name was Dottie. I had never taken the time to ask her name or to thank her for keeping the building clean."

"I have tried to learn the name of every Dottie I worked with ever since," the young man said. "Everyone is important and worthy of respect and recognition."

## God Loves Blind Boys

There was a blind boy in India who sold mangos and other fruits at a stand. Even though he could not see, he recognized the voices of many people who walked by. Children


would come and talk to him on one side, while on the other side children ran off with fruit. The blind lad was used to unkind treatment.

One day the boy heard a group of people coming. Suddenly someone bumped his table, and he heard his fruit rolling away. What could he do?

He could not see that the man who bumped his table had stopped and was picking up the scattered fruit. The man worked quietly. When the fruit was back on the table, the man spoke to the blind lad. "I am sorry I hit your table and the fruit fell. I have picked up the fruit and put it back on your table."

The blind boy was so surprised. He was not accustomed to kindness. He asked the man, "Are you Jesus?"

"No," the man replied, "I am not Jesus, but I follow Jesus. I love Him very much."

Remember: Every person is important, loved by God, and worthy of respect. 

*[Although believers in Jesus will spend eternity in heaven with the angels, redeemed humans, saints of God, will be rejoicing in something that the angels do not understand. I Peter 1:12 mentions that the angels desire to look into or understand the blessings of salvation. AY]*

*Hospitality* is an opportunity to use any gift

January 2024

God has given us to *bless* others.



## The Father's Hand

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

As Christians, there will come times in life when we question what God is doing, why He doesn't seem to hear us, or why He may seem far away. These times of worry and doubt often surround health, natural disasters, accidents, and other trauma whether relational, physical, or emotional. We as people were created as beings of worship. We are uniquely programmed to give recognition, love, honor, and proper fear to something bigger than ourselves. Unavoidably, these times will come. James 1:2-4 says, *"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."* Another translation uses the term "trials of various kinds." God never promised that the road would be easy. He did however, promise that He will be with us.

If God promises to be with us, why do we struggle with these feelings of doubt, worry, and abandonment? Recently, our infant daughter got


very sick. We ended up in the ER and the doctors wanted to start an IV. For an hour and a half, they poked and prodded and tried to get an IV into her tiny veins. Being only six weeks old, and obviously not understanding why she was being held down, her reaction was to scream. She screamed and cried in fear and frustration. All the while, I was right by her side, and she clung to my finger and it felt like her gaze bored into me—the only person in the room she knew. She was terrified, she was in pain, and I her protector, allowed it to happen. I knew it was for her good, and I told her that as I held her as much as I could, stroked her head and sang to her. I could tell her it would be ok, but she didn't understand, she just clung to what was familiar—me. As a father, this was one of the hardest things I've personally had to do. The tears that coursed down her cheeks were mirrored by my own. My voice broke as I sang to her. It was heart-rending to watch my daughter struggle and beg me (in her own little way) to save her. Because of her level of understanding, I couldn't explain

to her why and have her comprehend and accept what was happening. We just took one minute at a time. At the end of the ordeal, frustratingly, they were unable to get the IV in after multiple attempts and it felt like it was all for naught.

The next day, as we attempted to get her to sleep, I found that while she lay there in her hospital bed, if I held her hand, she would settle down and sleep, but if I pulled away, she would be fine for a bit but invariably would squeeze her little hand and find it empty and immediately become restless and started feeling around for a hand to hold. The instant she found my finger, she would settle down again and go to sleep. This happened several times before she was finally able to sleep without holding my hand.

God holds us like I did my daughter in that Emergency Room. God allows us to go through things because He knows the potential of what we can become and the healing and strength that we can find on the other side of those trials and trauma. He knows that even though it hurts us, and it hurts His heart to see us struggle, weep, and fear, He's allowing it for our good. God is right there just as I assured my daughter, "Daddy isn't going anywhere, I'm right here." Hebrews 13:5c says "*I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.*" And when my

daughter was done fighting, I was still there to hold her hand and stroke her head as she fell into an exhausted sleep. The next day, we discovered that her screams the night before had actually helped to strengthen her lungs and helped her health improve. What we thought was for naught, God used to help her get better. It's the same way with us. It looks like there is no way that this situation, trauma, or disaster could possibly benefit us. We think that only because we can't see the whole picture.

The interaction with my daughter not being at peace or able to sleep when I withdrew my hand from hers is similar to our relationship with God—with one important caveat. God doesn't withdraw His hand from His children. We withdraw our hand from His. We are facing something and we can't seem to find God in the situation—be it a broken relationship, health diagnoses, or loss of some kind. God never takes the first steps away. God never lets go of our hand. It's always the other way around. We are the ones who let go. We are the ones who wander. When we search for His presence and ask Him where He's gone, His answer is always the same. "I never left. I've been right here all along. I love you. Take my hand. I'm not going anywhere." 

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## THOUGHT GEMS

Be humble or stumble.

• • • • •

Great triumphs are born of great troubles.

• • • • •

If we fear God and love Him, we will obey Him.

• • • • •

The Old Testament points to the New Testament cross.

• • • • •

Until God opens the next door, praise Him in the hallway.

• • • • •

Our five senses are incomplete without the sixth sense, a sense of humor.

• • • • •

A believer without a church is like a bee without a hive.

• • • • •

Be kind to unkind people. They need it the most.

• • • • •

Doing your duty with a smile doubles its value.

• • • • •

A faith worth having is a faith worth sharing.

• • • • •

Discipline yourself so other won't need to.

• • • • •

Kind people are the best kind of people.

*[These Thought Gems were submitted by Ruth Hershberger, Jesup, GA.]*